

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Pee Dee

National Wildlife Refuge



Pee Dee is one of over 540 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System which is the world's most outstanding network of lands dedicated to wildlife. The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is "to preserve a national network of lands and waters for the conservation and management of the fish, wildlife, and plants of the United States for the benefit of present and future generations".



This blue goose, designed by Ding Darling, has become a symbol of the Refuge System.

Welcome to Your National Wildlife Refuge

Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge is located in Anson and Richmond Counties in south-central North Carolina just six miles north of Wadesboro. Situated in the triassic basin of the lower piedmont, the refuge's 8,443 acres of rolling hills covered with pines and hardwoods gently slope to the broad flood plain of the Pee Dee River.

The refuge is in the southern portion of an important area that has come to be known as the Yadkin/Pee Dee Rivers Focus Area. This area, surrounded by an arc of development of over five million people from Charlotte to Raleigh, has been called North Carolina's "Green Lung" or "Central Park." The refuge is an active partner in efforts to maintain the natural heritage of this area.

photo: Bill Sands



photo: Karen Cartlidge



**Part of a Network of Lands—
Born of Necessity, Managed with Care**
Pee Dee is one of over 500 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System which is the world's most outstanding network of lands dedicated to wildlife. Refuges provide habitat for over 200 endangered and threatened species as well as hundreds of other birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, insects and plants.

*cover photo:
Tim McCabe*

The National Wildlife Refuge System, first started in 1903 by President “Teddy” Roosevelt, is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and encompasses over 92 million acres across the nation.

History

Before the 1700’s, the area that is now the Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge was occupied by a tribe of Siouan-speaking Indians called the Catawbas who were later joined by other tribes. They farmed, hunted, and fished for survival.

Wildlife they encountered included the Florida panther, red wolf, ivory-billed woodpecker, and Bachman’s warbler. These species disappeared, however, beginning in the 1600’s with the settlement of Europeans and Africans who began clearing the rich flat lands along the river and adjacent upland hills. By the mid-1800’s cotton was the principal crop and remained so well into the 1900’s. Today, a mosaic of corn and soybeans are found in the Pee Dee floodplain.



photo: USFWS

The Pee Dee Refuge is located a few hundred yards from the once famous “Lockhart Gaddy Wild Goose Refuge”. Mr. Gaddy was an avid goose hunter who used live

decoys to hunt Canada geese in fields near to the Pee Dee River. In 1934, he decided he would rather provide food, shelter, and sanctuary for these majestic birds.

In October of 1934, Mr. Gaddy’s live decoys attracted nine wild Canada geese to his private pond, and by the early 1950’s, the flock had grown to

an estimated 10,000. Bird watchers from all over the United States and several foreign countries visited the Gaddy Goose Refuge to feed and observe the geese. Following the deaths of Mr. and Mrs. Gaddy, their refuge was closed to the public.

photo: USFWS



In the 1960s, numbers of both geese and ducks began to decline in south-central North Carolina. Fortunately, lands adjacent to the Pee Dee River and Brown Creek offered excellent

potential for waterfowl habitat development. With local and state support, the Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge was established in October, 1963, to provide wintering habitat for migratory waterfowl.

The original purpose for which the refuge was established was “...for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose for migratory birds.” Through new laws and executive orders, the mission of the refuge continues to expand. Refuge goals include resource protection, habitat restoration, resource management, environmental education and interpretation, wildlife-oriented recreation, and dynamic partnering.

Wildlife Habitats

The variety of habitats on the refuge supports a diversity of wildlife species. The refuge contains 3,000 acres of contiguous bottomland hardwood forest along Brown Creek. This area forms the core of the largest bottomland hardwood tract left in the piedmont of North Carolina, and has been placed on the registry of State Natural Heritage Areas.

The refuge also contains about 1,200 acres of upland pine forest and an approximate 4,300 acre mosaic of croplands, old fields, moist-soil units, and mixed pine-hardwood forest that intermingle with creeks, pristine ponds, and the Pee Dee River. Reforestation efforts in old fields have provided various successional forest stages for wildlife.

Wildlife of the Refuge

Waterfowl

Peak populations of waterfowl in the fall and winter can exceed 10,000 birds, with the majority being mallards and wood ducks. Other ducks often seen include widgeon, green and blue-winged teal, pintail, and gadwall. Due to an array of reasons, gone are the large migrating flocks of Canada geese, but the refuge is still used by several hundred migrating Canadas as well as a growing flock of about 200 year-round resident Canada geese. Both color phases of snow geese, as well as ring-necked ducks, scaup, northern shovelers, redheads, and canvasbacks can also be seen.

Other Migratory Birds

Besides ducks and geese, the refuge is a stopping point or destination each year for snipe, woodcock, hawks, owls, and many herons and egrets. The refuge is very important habitat for the increasingly imperiled neotropical migratory songbirds, especially along the Brown Creek bottomlands. The colorful blue grosbeak, scarlet tanager, and prothonotary warbler all call the refuge their home. The refuge bird list contains nearly 170 bird species.

Resident Wildlife

The refuge mammal list contains 28 species including white-tailed deer, red and grey fox, bobcat, beaver, squirrel, golden mouse, and pine vole. Amphibians and reptiles

photo: Tim McCabe



photo: Bill Alexander



number 28 and 48 species, respectively, including spotted salamander, American toad, pickerel frog, river cooter, box turtle, rough green snake, and copperhead. The refuge waters are also full of fish such as channel catfish, largemouth bass, and redear sunfish.

Endangered and Threatened Species

The peregrine falcon is an occasional visitor. Bald eagles are building nests near the refuge and can be seen more and more soaring above the refuge. The refuge also has at least one pair of the endangered red-cockaded woodpeckers, the only woodpecker that makes its nest in the cavity of a live pine tree.

Providing for a Diversity of Plants and Animals

A variety of management programs enhance the array of habitats the refuge offers wildlife.

Local farmers assist with the refuge croplands on a share basis, leaving part of their crops in the fields for wildlife. Only crops that are beneficial to wildlife, such as wheat, corn, milo, and soybeans, are planted. Farmers also tend several native warm season grass fields which replicate open areas that occurred historically through natural disturbances such as tornados and catastrophic fires.

These natural grasses are more beneficial to wildlife as opposed to exotic grasses that are more often planted. The “biological” farm program, with its low chemical use, no-till planting method, wide field borders, and other wildlife-friendly practices, serves as a model farm and study site for farmers, educators, and agricultural extension specialists.

photo: Ted Borg





Refuge Headquarters



Refuge Boundary



Parking Area



Paved State Roads (open year-round)



Refuge Roads (may be closed seasonally)



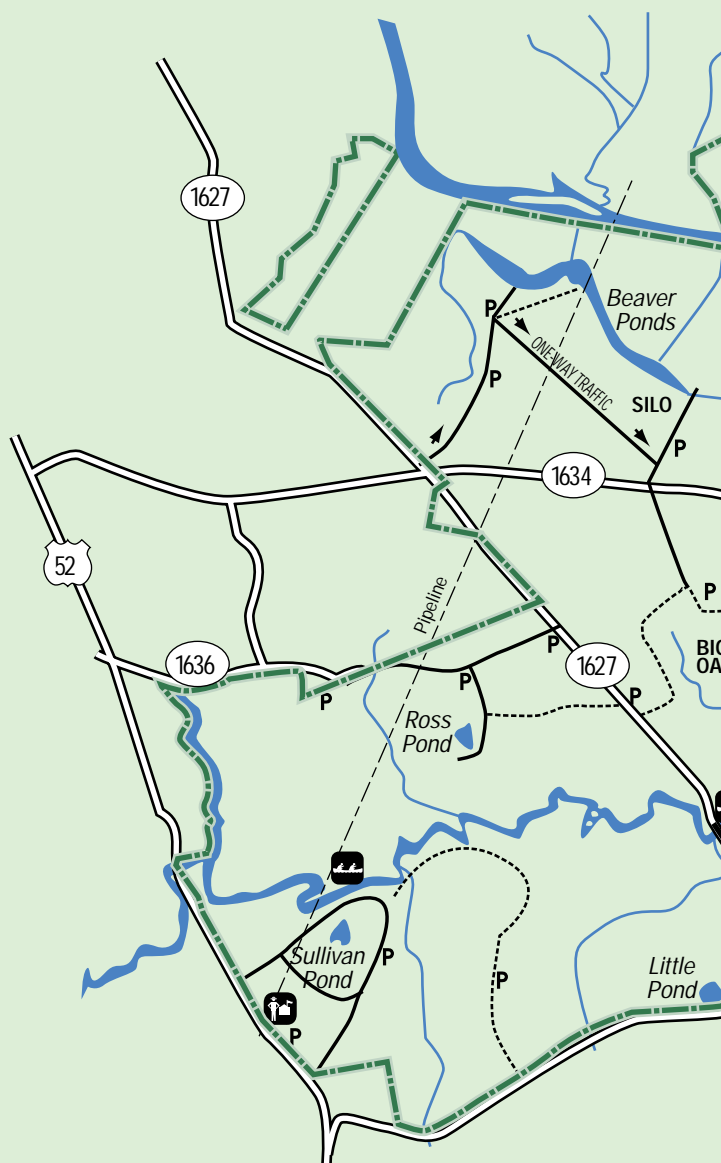
Foot Traffic Only (hiking trail or woods road)



Canoe/Kayak Access

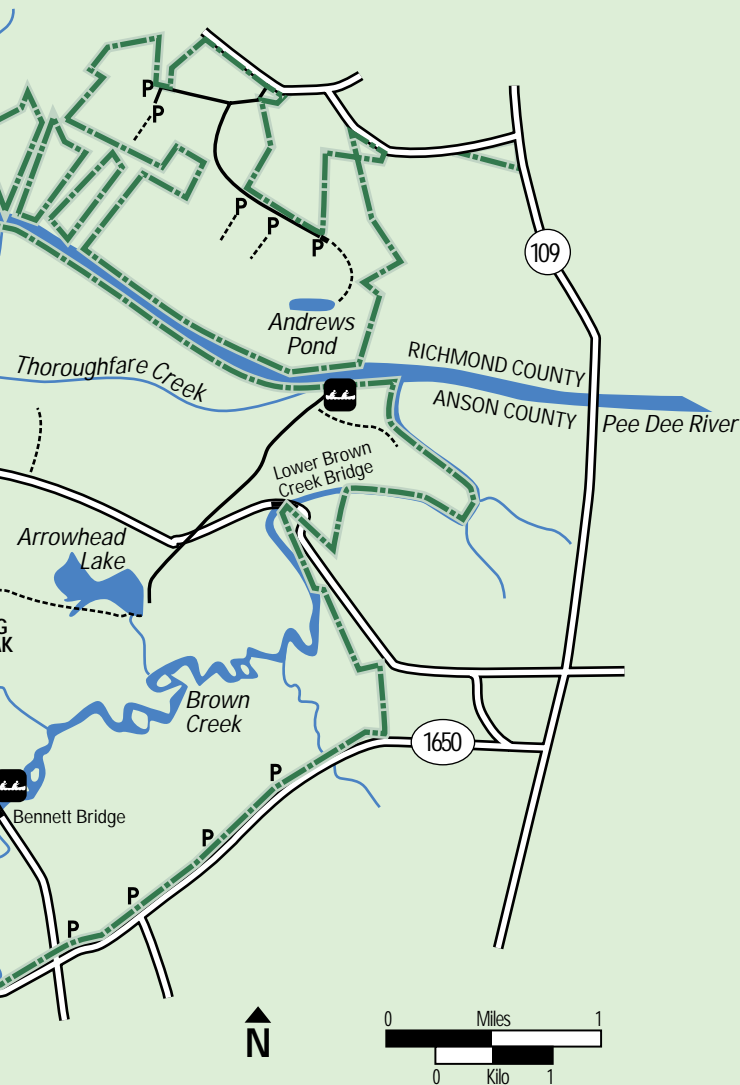
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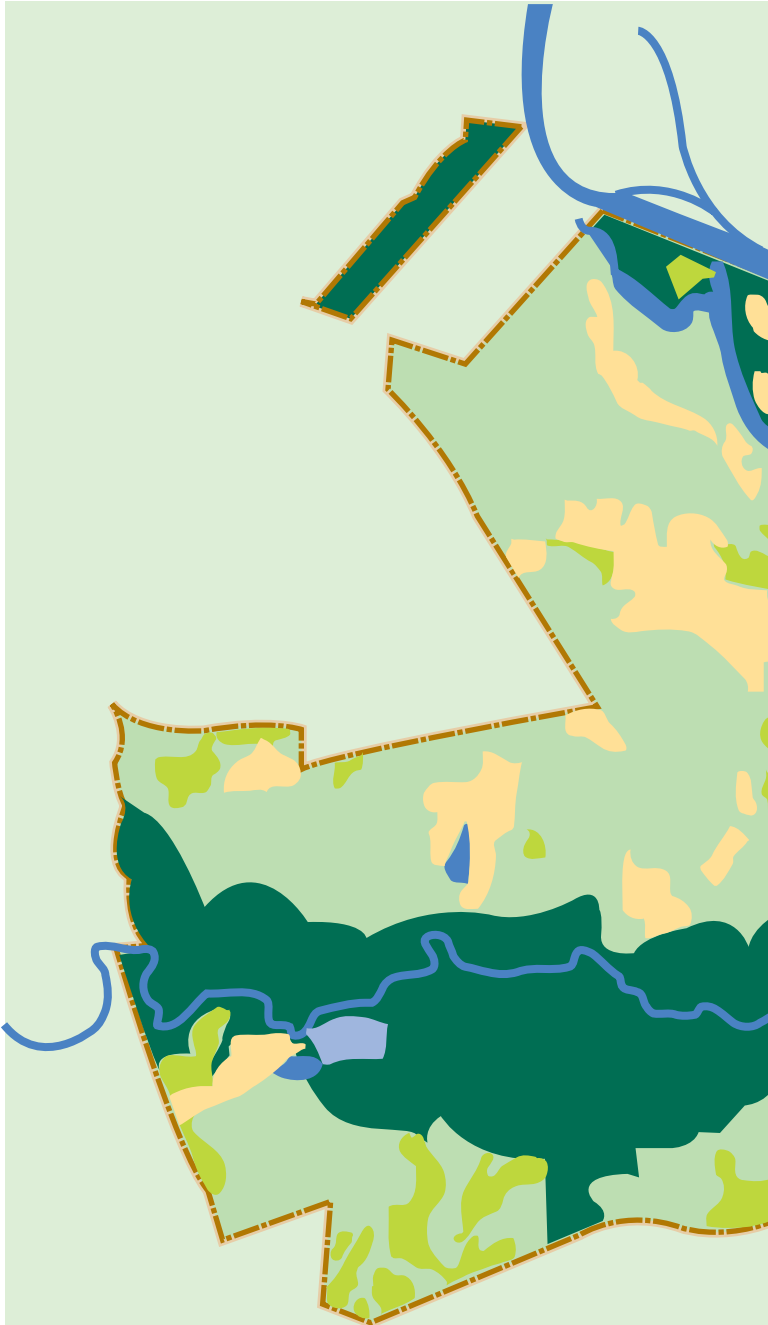
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








Pee Dee

National Wildlife Refuge

-  Refuge Boundary
-  Open Fields-Some are Seasonally Flooded
-  Hardwood
-  Pine and Pine/hardwood
-  Natural Regeneration, Reforestation or Oldfields
-  Seasonally Flooded Impoundments

Moist soil impoundments are managed by lowering and raising water levels, and disking, mowing, or burning every few years to maintain plants in an early successional stage. These shallowly flooded areas are drained over a period of weeks beginning in late March. This regime creates the proper germination conditions for many favorable moist soil plants, such as smartweed, and produces mudflats needed by migrating shorebirds moving through in April.

Selected impoundments are drained, disked, and shallowly flooded in mid July to create mudflats again for shorebirds during their critical August migration. All impoundments, whether they be moist soil plant areas, mudflats, or crops left in the fields by refuge farmers, are flooded in early fall to “set the table” for arriving waterfowl.



photo: Martin Kaehny

Prescribed burning is conducted in upland pine stands to mimic the natural fires that historically burned through these areas every two to four years. These fires suppress hardwood trees, leaving an open, park-like stand of

pinos that are preferred by certain plants and animals, including the refuge's population of the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW).

The RCW is considered a keystone species, having many other animals using its cavity either as a convenience or a requirement. Their cavity trees are indicated by a

painted white band at eye level around the trunk of the tree. Refuge staff translocate RCWs, install artificial nesting cavities, and trap and band them to monitor population levels.

Artificial nesting boxes are placed in open areas for bluebirds, near water for wood ducks, and in bottomland hardwood areas for prothonotary warblers. These boxes help augment natural cavities that are scarce because trees are often cut before they reach an age that natural cavities develop. Refuge staff and volunteers monitor these boxes monthly.



photo: USFWS

Wood ducks are trapped and banded as the only means of monitoring the population of these woods dwelling birds. Neotropical migratory songbirds are studied each spring by mist netting and banding as part of the nation-wide “MAPS” (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) project.

Reforestation through the use of seedlings, acorns, and other tree seed will return many areas to forest, especially along streams and in open areas that are not beneficial to waterfowl. Upland pine areas are thinned to achieve the tree density required by the red-cockaded woodpecker. Bottomland areas, that may have been altered by previous poor forestry practices, may also be thinned to return the forest to the proper diversity and abundance of hardwoods species.

Wildlife Calendar

This calendar is a general guide to seasonal wildlife events and habitat management practices that influence those events. Weather may cause slight variations. The best times to observe wildlife are generally early morning and just before sunset.

January

Waterfowl are concentrated on refuge ponds and impoundments with an abundance of mallards and other puddle ducks. Canada geese may be seen in refuge fields and impoundments, and bald eagles may be sighted soaring over refuge fields near water bodies. "Cool season" prescribed burns are conducted in upland pine stands to suppress hardwoods and stimulated herbaceous plant growth.

February

Most waterfowl are beginning to migrate north near the end of the month. White-tailed deer bucks begin shedding old antlers. Wood ducks are searching for and establishing nests in tree cavities and artificial nesting boxes.

March

Most migratory waterfowl are gone, and slow release of impounded water begins to stimulate the growth of natural plant foods. Monthly checks lasting through July of wood duck, prothonotary warbler, and bluebird artificial nesting boxes have commenced.

April

Songbird migration has begun, and an occasional wild turkey may be seen strutting in an open area. Shorebirds may be observed in shallow waters and mud flats. Impounded water release continues while clogged culverts and water control structures dammed by beaver are a constant problem. The bulk of corn planting is completed while wheat is turning golden brown.

May

Spring wild flowers are at their peak of abundance and brilliance, and "growing season" prescribed burns are conducted in upland pine stands. The annual "MAPS" study has begun

photo: USFWS



photo: Bill Alexander



with songbird banding and observations recorded. Young wood ducks are seen in vegetated perimeters of water bodies.

June

Most wildlife activity has slowed due to hot weather. Deer are giving birth as are many other wildlife species. Songbirds are tending to young. Wheat is harvested and soybeans are planted.

July

Extremely hot weather slows wildlife activity greatly. Wading birds are seen in shallow water poised over a potential catch. Deer observation is best with fawns observed browsing with their mother in open field edges. Refuge staff and farmers conduct the post-nesting season annual mowing of trails, roads, and right-of-ways.

August

The core shorebird migration is upon us. Wood duck trapping with rocket nets and swim-in traps is well underway. New water control structures are installed, and many road and

levee maintenance projects are initiated due to prevailing dry weather conditions.

September

Teal migration is in progress. The refuge share of cooperatively farmed corn that is not harvested is left in the field to await flooding for ducks. Wildlife in general are more easily observed toward month's end as temperatures begin to cool.

October

The fall migration of ducks and geese

photo: S. Maslowski



photo: Bill Sands



photo: Bill Alexander





begins. Wheat planting for geese has begun. Bucks are rubbing the protective velvet off of their antlers and they begin to stake their claim to a territory. Trees, especially dogwood, maple, oaks and elms begin the autumn turn of colors to shades of red, yellow, and orange.

November

Ducks and geese have arrived in great numbers. Deer and other wildlife are often observed in open areas. Many small mammals are active. Many fall blooming flowers are in their prime.

December

Bald eagles may be sighted constructing a nest or soaring for prey. Bucks are likely to be seen now in their “rut” period where they compete for mates. Ducks and geese are still abundant. The local Audubon Society affiliate conducts the annual Christmas Bird Count.

Public Use Opportunities

Birding and general wildlife observation are the fastest growing activities on the refuge. A quarter-mile handicapped-accessible nature trail leads from a parking lot on the wildlife drive to an observation blind that views both Sullivan’s Pond and Sullivan’s Impoundment. The three mile Prothonotary Warbler Trail traverses several refuge habitat types. Both trails are well maintained with interpretive signs. There are also a number of non-interpreted woods roads that permit access to remote corners of the refuge.

The portion of the Pee Dee River that runs through the refuge is part of a larger canoe trail down the Yadkin/Pee Dee River system. A popular section to canoe runs from Tillery Dam north of the refuge to the Highway 109 bridge just south of the refuge. The portion of Brown

Creek that runs through the heart of the refuge is open to canoeing.

A two-and-a-half mile interpreted wildlife drive samples most refuge natural features including ponds, migratory bird impoundments, bottomland hardwoods, native warm season grass fields, and upland pine. In addition, several state-maintained paved roads and refuge gravel roads also permit the viewing of wildlife by vehicle.

Fishing is open from March 15 to October 15 on six ponds, Brown Creek, and the Pee Dee River. Largemouth bass, bluegill, crappie, and catfish are some popular fish caught.

Hunting season generally runs from early September to late February. A free permit is required (see Refuge Manager) for hunting mourning

doves, squirrel, raccoon, quail, rabbit, and deer by archery. A special quota permit is required for youth deer hunts and hunting deer by muzzleloader and modern gun.

Consult the refuge Public Use Regulations brochure for hunting season dates and other hunting and fishing information.

Volunteer Information

A growing number of volunteers assist the refuge with a variety of biological and maintenance projects, including wildlife surveys, checking nesting boxes, building boardwalks, and conducting education programs. For volunteer information contact the refuge Volunteer Coordinator.



photo: USFWS

In addition, a non-profit cooperating association, the Friends of the Pee Dee Refuge, has formed to unite volunteers, help develop and staff an Environmental Education and Visitor Center, and help the refuge to fulfill its mission. For more information write to the Friends of the Pee Dee Refuge at the refuge address.

Enjoying the Refuge

The public is welcome to visit the refuge any time of the year from sunrise to sunset. In order to lessen impacts to wildlife and habitats, camping is prohibited on the refuge. There are several motels and numerous restaurants and gas stations within a ten minute drive. For more information, contact the Anson County Chamber of Commerce at P.O. Box 305, Wadesboro, NC 28170 or telephone 704/694 4181.

Layered clothing during cool months and the use of insect repellant during warm months are recommended (Ticks and chiggers are common from April to September). Binoculars, spotting scopes, and field guides are also highly recommended.

All government property including natural, historic, and archaeological features are protected by Federal Law. Searching for or removal of objects of antiquity or other value is strictly prohibited. Please do not pick flowers or remove other vegetation.

Firearms are prohibited unless specifically authorized by the Refuge Manager. Firearms transported in vehicles during hunts must be unloaded and encased or dismantled. Yellow horizontal marking on trees indicates a refuge compartment boundary. Red marking indicates a no hunting zone, and red and white marking indicates a seasonally closed area. Consult the refuge Public Use



Regulations brochure for more information.

Pets

Pets must be on a leash and under control of the owner at all times.



Littering

Littering is prohibited. Please use litter barrels provided or take your litter with you.



Vehicle Access

The use of motor vehicles is permitted only on designated roads. ATV's are prohibited.

Weapons

Weapons are prohibited except as authorized during scheduled hunts.



Camping and Open Fires

Camping and open fires are prohibited on the refuge. Camping facilities are located near the refuge. Consult the manager for details.



The refuge office, located six miles north of Wadesboro on Highway 52, is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm.



Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge
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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
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